

METRIC CONVERSION ACT OF 1973

OCTOBER 23, 1973.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. TEAGUE of Texas, from the Committee on Science and Astronautics, submitted the following

REPORT

together with

ADDITIONAL VIEWS

[To accompany H.R. 11035]

The Committee on Science and Astronautics, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 11035) to declare a national policy of converting to the metric system in the United States, and to establish a National Metric Conversion Board to coordinate the voluntary conversion to the metric system over a period of ten years; having considered the same, report favorably thereon without amendment and recommend that the bill do pass.

PURPOSE OF THE BILL

The purpose of the bill is to declare, as a matter of national policy, that the United States will convert to the metric system of weights and measures on a voluntary basis. To provide a coordinating mechanism, the bill establishes a National Metric Conversion Board with a life of ten years, and with a membership of 25 persons broadly representative of all sectors of American society which will be affected by this change.

EXPLANATION OF THE BILL

The United States is now in the early stages of converting to the metric system. Many industries have already announced that they are changing the sizes of their products and the standards to which they are manufactured to the metric system. Some major American automotive concerns have decided that all automobiles manufactured by

them, including the parts and components made by their subcontractors and other suppliers, will be made on the basis of the metric system within the next few years. Similarly, the school systems of a number of States have announced that textbooks will be entirely changed to the metric system by the year 1976. The pharmaceutical industry is largely using the metric system—as does the medical profession. These are examples.

The choice before the Congress is not whether we should move to the metric system. That conversion has already begun. The choice is between continuing the conversion process in an entirely uncoordinated fashion, as is the case now, or going forward with the conversion process on a coordinated basis. The testimony heard by the Committee indicated that there is wide agreement on the desirability of going forward on a coordinated basis. Furthermore, it is apparent that many firms which are now considering conversion are only awaiting a firm statement by the Congress committing the United States to the conversion before they, too, adopt the metric system.

Findings

The Congress finds that the use of the metric system was authorized by an Act of Congress passed in 1866, that the United States was one of the original signatories to the Convention on the Meter, that the customary units in use in the United States have been defined based on metric units since 1893, that other major industrial countries are now converting to the metric system and that the United States is the only such country in the world which has not established a national policy on converting to the metric system, and that the Metric Study conducted by the Secretary of Commerce and submitted to the Congress in 1971 pursuant to Public Law 90-472 recommends that the United States convert to the metric system.

Statement of Policy

The bill declares that it shall be the policy of the United States to change to the metric system in a coordinated manner, and that the purpose of this coordination shall be to reduce the total cost of the changeover. The changeover shall be carried out by means of the voluntary participation of each affected sector and group in the nation. In order to encourage the efficient changeover and to minimize the overall costs, the general principle that changeover costs shall lie where they fall is included in the policy statement. That part of the changeover period involving active federal participation shall be ten years, and the goal of the federal participation in the process shall be that after ten years metric units shall be the predominant, if not the exclusive, language of measurement in the United States. And finally, the policy of the United States shall be to assist in the development of a broad, national public education program.

National Metric Conversion Board

The bill provides for the establishment of a National Metric Conversion Board. The Board shall be composed of 21 persons from the public who will be appointed by the President. The members shall serve at the pleasure of the President and they shall serve such terms as he specifies. They shall be broadly representative of those groups in

American society which will be affected by the changeover to the metric system, and shall include representatives of industry, labor, business and commerce, the consumer, education, state and local government, science and engineering, and other affected groups. The membership shall include, in addition, two members from the House of Representatives and two members from the Senate of the United States. The President shall designate one of the non-congressional members to serve as Chairman and another to serve as Vice Chairman of the Board. The bill further provides that the Board shall have a life of ten years and that unless otherwise provided by the Congress it shall have no compulsory powers.

Duties of the Board

The bill provides that the Board shall perform three major functions: (1) the development of a broad, overall conversion plan for the United States; (2) the implementation of this conversion plan in all sectors of American society where weights and measures are used, and (3) the conduct of a program of public education in the metric system at all levels from elementary to adult education in order that the American people may become familiar with the meaning and use of metric terms and measures in their daily lives.

Consultation.—The Board shall consult with and take into account the interests and views of industry, labor, the consumer and other groups which would be affected by the changeover to the metric system. The intent of this consultation process is that each sector or industry in the country shall be asked, on a voluntary basis, to develop its own plan for the conversion to the metric system in such a time period as that group feels to be in its own best interest insofar as efficiency and minimum costs are concerned. The Board is further directed to consult with existing organizations in the field of standards development and coordination.

Coordination.—The Board shall develop procedures whereby industry groups shall come together on a voluntary basis under the auspices of the Board to discuss and agree on the best metric sizes, shapes, or other measurements for general use which are consistent with the needs and capabilities of the manufacturers, suppliers, consumers, and other interested and affected groups.

Publication of Conversion Plans.—The Board shall publicize the plans and programs developed under its auspices to insure that all interested and affected groups, organizations, and individuals have an opportunity to comment on them, and if they so desire, appear before the Board at such public hearings as the Board may hold.

New Engineering Standards.—The Board shall facilitate and encourage the development of new or revised engineering standards based on metric measurements in those specific fields or areas where such standards will result in improved design or increases in economy consistent with the efficient use of energy and the conservation of natural resources.

Existing Engineering Standards.—The Board shall facilitate and encourage the retention, in new metric language, of those United States engineering standards, practices, and conventions that are internationally accepted or which embody superior technology.

International Cooperation.—The Board shall cooperate with foreign governments and international organizations which have become concerned with the encouragement and coordination of the metric system with the objective of gaining international recognition for metric standards proposed by the United States.

Public Education.—The Board shall carry out programs of public education and information aimed at making every citizen of the United States familiar with the metric system. These programs shall include public information activities conducted by the Board itself through the use of newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and other media; consultation by the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare and by the Director of the National Science Foundation with education associations and other education groups to insure that the metric system is made a part of the curriculum in all of the nation's educational institutions and that teachers are trained to teach the metric system; consultation by the Secretary of Commerce with the National Conference of Weights and Measures to assure that weights and measures officials in each state and local jurisdiction are fully informed of the metric changeover activities in the country and are assisted in their efforts to bring about timely amendments to weights and measures laws; and such other public information activities by any federal agency which would relate to the mission of the agency.

International Consultations.—The Board shall consult with foreign governments and organizations and groups in other countries, including international standards organizations, to the extent it determines appropriate. Such contacts by the Board shall be accomplished through consultation with the Department of State.

Metric Studies.—The Board shall collect, analyze, and publicize information about the extent to which the metric system is being used, and shall evaluate the benefits and costs of such metric usage.

Metric Conversion Research.—The Board shall conduct research on any unresolved problems associated with the conversion to and use of the metric system and shall publicize the results of this research.

Comprehensive Metric Conversion Plan

The bill provides that the Board shall prepare a comprehensive, overall metric conversion plan for the changeover of the United States to the metric system in accordance with the policies established by the act. The plan may include recommendations for legislation deemed necessary or appropriate by the Board. The plan shall be completed by the Board within the first twelve months after funds have been appropriated to the Board. When it is completed the plan shall be submitted to the Secretary of Commerce who, no later than ninety days after he received it shall submit it to the President and to both Houses of the Congress accompanied by such recommendations that he deems appropriate. The bill further provides that the plan shall be submitted by the Secretary to both Houses of the Congress on the same day and on a day on which each House is in session.

The Congress after reviewing the plan, may disapprove it, in whole or in part, by concurrent resolution within sixty days of receipt of the plan. If the plan is not disapproved by the Congress, the Board shall implement it after the 60-day Congressional review period has expired.

If the Congress does disapprove the plan, then the bill provides that the Board shall submit to the Secretary of Commerce a revised plan within sixty days of the date of such disapproval. The revised plan shall be submitted by the Secretary of Commerce with his recommendations, if any, to the Congress and be subject to the same review and approval procedures as the original plan.

If, after a plan has been approved and implementation has begun, the Board determines that there is a need to amend the plan, an amendment to the plan shall be submitted by the Board for review and approval in the same manner as the original metric conversion plan.

Annual Reports

The bill provides that the Board shall submit annual reports of its activities and progress under the Act to the Secretary of Commerce, the President, and to the Congress.

Authority of the Board

The bill provides that the Board has the authority to perform the following tasks and activities.

Board Committees.—The Board is authorized to establish a Board Executive Committee and such other committees as it deems desirable.

Committees and Advisory Panels.—The Board is authorized to establish such committees and advisory panels as it deems necessary in order to bring together and work with each sector of American society, and to implement the detailed changeover plans for each of those sectors. Invitation to participate in each of these committees and advisory panels shall be extended to all affected organizations within each sector, and participation in the committees and panels shall be on a voluntary basis.

Hearings.—The Board is authorized to conduct hearings at such times and in such places as it deems appropriate in the furtherance of the policies of the Act.

Contract Authority.—The Board is authorized to enter into contracts with Federal and State agencies, private firms, institutions, and individuals for the conduct of research and surveys, the preparation of reports, and such other studies or related activities as it deems necessary to discharge its duties. Such contracts shall be entered into by the Board in accordance with the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended.

Delegation to Executive Director.—The Board is authorized to delegate to the Executive Director of the Board such authority and responsibilities as it deems advisable.

Additional Authority.—In addition to the specific authority provided in the bill, the Board is authorized to perform such other activities as may be necessary to carry out the duties prescribed by this Act.

Gifts

The bill provides authority to the Board to accept, hold, administer, and utilize gifts, donations, and bequests of property. Such gifts are to be used for the purposes of aiding and facilitating the work of the Board. Gifts received for this purpose by the Board may be considered as gifts to the United States under the income tax laws of the United States. The bill specifies that, upon the request of the Board,

the Secretary of the Treasury may invest the proceeds of such gifts in securities of the United States. Income accruing from such securities shall be dispensed on the order of the Board and funds not expended by the Board when the life of the Board expires shall revert to the Treasury of the United States.

Compensation of the Board

The bill provides that members of the Board who are not employees of the United States shall be entitled to compensation at a rate not to exceed the daily rate currently being paid to Grade 18 of the General Schedule which applies to Federal employees of the Executive Branch. All members of the Board shall also be entitled to travel pay and travel expenses when traveling on the business of the Board.

Staff Services

The bill provides that there shall be an Executive Director of the Board, who shall be appointed by the President. The Executive Director shall be responsible to the Board for carrying out the metric conversion program according to the provisions of the Act and the policies established by the Board. The Executive Director shall serve at Level IV of the Executive Schedule applicable to the Executive Level Appointments in the Executive Branch. The Board is also authorized to appoint such staff personnel as may be necessary and to employ experts and consultants.

Financial and Administrative Services

The bill provides that, at the request of the Board, financial and administrative services, including those related to budgeting, accounting, financial reporting, personnel, and procurement, shall be provided to the Board by the Secretary of Commerce. The Board shall reimburse the Secretary for the costs of such services.

Funds for the Board

The bill authorizes the appropriation of such sums as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of the Act. Such appropriations may remain available for obligation or expenditures for such a period or periods as may be specified in the Appropriation Acts.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

The Committee on Science and Astronautics has, by House rule, been charged with general oversight of the "standardization of weights and measures and the metric system" since the Committee was first formed in 1959. Beginning that year and in every Congress since, bills have been introduced by members of the Committee to effect wider use of the metric system in the United States or to provide for surveys and studies to weigh the advisability of doing so. All of the earlier bills were aimed at the latter objective, most of them being sponsored by the Committee's former chairman, George P. Miller of California.

Thus bills providing for the careful study of the values and problems of converting the nation to a metric system were introduced in the 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, and 90th Congresses. In the 87th Congress such a bill was reported from the Committee and placed on the House Consent Calendar but was objected to. In the 89th Congress, 5 days of hearings were held, in August 1965, and a study bill was reported by the Committee but the House took no action.

In the 90th Congress a similar metric study bill, H.R. 3136, was introduced on January 19, 1967. This bill was reported from Committee on May 6, 1967, and passed the House June 24, 1968. It passed the Senate June 30, 1968, and became Public Law 90-472 when signed by the President on August 9, 1968. This new act ordered the Secretary of Commerce to investigate and appraise the relative merits of metric conversion. The Secretary was ordered to report his findings back to the Congress within 3 years.

Pursuant to the Act, the Secretary formed a Metric System Study Advisory Panel of 45 representatives from all walks of American life and commerce which consulted with, and took testimony from, literally hundreds of business organizations, labor groups, professional societies, manufacturing, farm, retail associations, State and local officials, and so on. The results of the survey, which strongly favored an orderly conversion to the metric system, was forwarded to the Congress by the Secretary of Commerce on July 29, 1971. Its report, called "A Metric America," has been widely disseminated and was reprinted as a Committee Print of the Committee on Science and Astronautics in October of 1971.

Early in the 92d Congress the Administration, on the basis of the study submitted by the Department of Commerce, forwarded to Congress recommended legislation for a voluntary 10-year plan to convert the nation to the metric system. The bill was introduced in the House by Mr. Miller and others in March of 1972. Due to the press of other legislation, however, and because similar legislation apparently would be acted upon at a relatively early date by the Senate, no action was taken on this bill. Subsequently, the Senate did pass an amended version of the Administration bill, but the action came too late for the Committee on Science and Astronautics to consider it.

A number of bills were introduced in the current 93d Congress early in the year. Some of these were identical to the earlier Administration bill and most of them were close approximations of it. The Administration again forwarded a slightly revised version of the bill it submitted the previous year, which was introduced as H.R. 5749 by Mr. Teague on March 15.

All such metric legislation was referred to the Subcommittee on Science, Research and Development, which held hearings on them *en bloc*. These hearings were comprehensive and covered a period of two weeks in March and May of 1973. Not only were representatives from many of the most concerned and knowledgeable organizations heard, but also a number of members of the House; statements were taken as well from members of the Senate and from appropriate officials from England, Australia and New Zealand who are in charge of programs presently converting their respective nations to the metric system.

Following a number of informal discussions and meetings by Committee members, among themselves and with other interested parties, and pursuant to a considerable amount of follow-up staff work, the Subcommittee met on September 20, 1973 and unanimously approved a somewhat amended version of H.R. 5749 which it reported to the full Committee. The full Committee met on October 16, considered the amended bill reported by the Subcommittee, made a number of additional changes, and ordered a clean bill, H.R. 11035, reported to the House. Action was by voice vote without dissent being heard.

Rationale for the Legislation

The hearings and testimony taken by the Committee, not only during the current Congress but in previous congresses, has indicated that a strong majority favor converting the nation—gradually and voluntarily—to the metric system. While there have been some variations in the methodology proposed, there can be little doubt that a general conviction exists that the metric system is inevitable.

Some useful observations contributing to the fundamental rationale for conversion were succinctly stated in the summary of the Department of Commerce report, "A Metric America." The summary follows:

Many times in the last two centuries, the Congress considered the merits of adopting the metric system as America's primary language of measurement. Each time, action was postponed, often because the metric system was not then in use by our major trading partners abroad. Now, with every other major nation converted to metric or committed to conversion, this obstacle has been removed.

In the light of these and other changing circumstances, the Congress directed the Secretary of Commerce to undertake the U.S. Metric Study. Its purpose was to evaluate the impact on America of the metric trend and to consider alternatives for national policy.

The U.S. Metric Study concludes that eventually the United States will join the rest of the world in the use of the metric system as the predominant common language of measurement. Rather than drifting to metric with no national plan to help the sectors of our society and guide our relationships abroad, a carefully planned transition in which all sectors participate voluntarily is preferable. The change will not come quickly, nor will it be without difficulty; but Americans working cooperatively can resolve this question once and for all.

The basis for the conclusion that the U.S. will eventually be metric lies in the findings of the Study that America is already metric in some respects; that we are becoming more so; and that the great majority of businessmen, educators and other informed participants in the Study reported that increased use of the metric system is in the best interests of America. They also believe that it is better for the nation to move to metric by plan rather than by no plan at all.

They go beyond the question of whether or not the United States should progressively replace its present measurement language with metric. The question they ask is how and when America will choose to make the change. It is primarily a question of timing and preparation. Shall the nation do so by plan over a comparatively brief period of ten to fifteen years? Or shall it drift toward a metric usage?

Consequently, the costs and benefits to be considered are not so much those of changing to metric versus not changing at all. The key comparison is between changing *by plan* versus changing with *no plan*—with no framework to guide the nation.

There will be real costs and difficulties in the change, whether or not it is done by plan. The Study indicates that such difficulties will in any event have to be faced as metric usage reaches substantial proportions in America. Thus, without a plan the United States would experience all the difficulties of dual inventories, dual education, dual thinking, dual sets of tools and dual production—perhaps not so soon but over a much longer period of time.

On the basis of all the factors that were considered, the Study concludes that it would be best for the nation to change to metric under a coordinated program that provides for flexibility and encourages the various sectors of society to deal with their particular problems voluntarily. Within this framework, these sectors would work out their own timetables and programs, dovetailing them with those of other sectors.

Developing a national program for change would require a great deal of forethought and discussion. But the Study finds that two major activities should be begun immediately, because they would be pivotal in preparing the nation for increased use of the metric system.

The first is education. Every schoolchild should have the opportunity to become as conversant with the metric system as he is with our present measurement system.

The second concerns international standards. High quality American industrial practices should be much more vigorously promoted in international negotiations that are beginning to establish "engineering standards" on a worldwide basis and will increasingly affect world trade.

While the majority of the American people are not well versed in the metric system, the Study shows that those who are informed about it tend to favor it. This demonstrates a need for public education to help all citizens to cope with the trend to metric and poses a challenge to the Congress to point the way for all Americans.

SECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE BILL

SECTION 1

The title of the bill is the "Metric Conversion Act of 1973".

SECTION 2

Findings:

(1) The use of metric units has been legal in the United States since 1866.

(2) The United States signed the Convention of the Meter establishing international metric measurement standards and procedures to update them.

(3) These international metric measurement standards are the base upon which United States customary units are defined (e.g. 1 inch is defined as 2.54 centimeters).

(4) Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, India, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of South Africa are now committed to the metric system.

(5) The United States is the only industrially developed country not committed to the metric system.

(6) In a study authorized by P.L. 90-472, the Secretary of Commerce has found that the increased use of the metric system in the United States is inevitable and that this change will best be accomplished through a national program without Federal subsidies. Further, that the changeover to predominant but not exclusive metric usage should occur within 10 years and should be guided by a planning and coordinating board cooperating with all sectors of society; and that public education in metric usage and international standards making should receive immediate attention.

SECTION 3

United States policy is declared to be:

(a) To change the United States to the metric system in a coordinated manner;

(b) To implement this changeover through voluntary participation of all affected sectors;

(c) To encourage the voluntary conversion of all sectors of the United States economy to the predominant but not exclusive use of metric units within 10 years;

(d) That changeover costs shall lie where they fall;

(e) To assist in educating the public to think and work in metric terms.

SECTION 4

Definition of special terms.

(11)

SECTION 5

Establishes a National Metric Conversion Board to implement the Act.

SECTION 6

Describes the composition of the Board:

- (a) Twenty-one persons broadly representative of the American society appointed by the President to serve at his pleasure; one designated Chairman, one Vice Chairman by the President;
- (b) Two Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- (c) Two Senators appointed by the President of the Senate.

SECTION 7

Vacancies notwithstanding, the Board can act, and a quorum is eleven members.

SECTION 8

The Board has no compulsory powers.

SECTION 9

The lifetime of the Board is 10 years.

SECTION 10

The Board shall devise a program of encouragement, coordination and education to implement the Act. It shall:

- (a) Consult with all sectors of American society;
- (b) Provide procedures for industry participation in developing changeover programs consistent with the broad national interest.
- (c) Publicize such programs for comment, and if requested, hold hearings on them;
- (d) Encourage rapid development of new metric-based standards where improvement in economy, design, etc., can result;
- (e) Encourage retention in new metric-based standards of United States designs, etc., that are internationally accepted or technically superior;
- (f) Cooperate with appropriate organizations to gain recognition for metric standards proposed by the United States and to retain customary units in international standards during the changeover period;
- (g) Familiarize the public with the metric system through information and education programs, including:
 - (1) mass media public information programs and communication with interested groups;
 - (2) consultation with educators, HEW, and NSF to ensure the metric system is taught well;
 - (3) consultation to inform and assist state and local weights and measures officials; and
 - (4) appropriate public information programs by other Federal agencies.
- (h) Consult as appropriate with international organizations and with foreign governments through the State Department;

(i) Use and publish data on metric usage and its impact as a basis for efforts to minimize adverse effects;

(j) Conduct and publish results of research on problems or impacts of metric conversion.

SECTION 11

Procedures for development, approval, and amendment of a conversion plan are specified as follows:

(a) Within twelve months after funds are appropriated, the Board shall submit to the Secretary of Commerce a plan for implementing the Act. The Secretary will submit the plan to the President and to Congress within 90 days with his recommendations.

(b) Congress has 60 legislative days to disapprove the plan by Concurrent Resolution;

(c) If disapproved, a revised plan shall be submitted to the Secretary within 60 days and shall be subject to the procedures in (a) and (b);

(d) Amendments to an approved plan are subject to the same approval procedures.

SECTION 12

Provides for annual reports.

SECTION 13

Authorizes the Board to:

- (a) Establish board subcommittees and an executive committee;
- (b) Establish advisory committees from sectors of the economy;
- (c) Conduct hearings;
- (d) Make contracts with public or private agencies;
- (e) Delegate authority to the Executive Director;
- (f) Perform other necessary acts.

SECTION 14

(a) Authorizes the Board to accept and utilize gifts;

(b) For tax purposes, such gifts are considered gifts to the United States;

(c) Treasury Department may invest such Board funds in United States securities;

(d) When the Board ceases to exist, unexpended funds revert to the Treasury.

SECTION 15

When on Board business, members shall be paid at the daily rate for GS-18, plus travel expenses.

SECTION 16

(a) The President shall appoint an Executive Director who shall be responsible to the Board;

(b) The Executive Director shall serve full time at Level IV of the Executive Schedule.

SECTION 17

- (a) Authorizes the Board to hire the necessary staff;
- (b) Authorizes the Board to employ consultants.

SECTION 18

Administrative services requested by the Board shall be provided by the Secretary of Commerce on a reimbursable basis.

SECTION 19

Authorizes the appropriation of necessary funds to carry out provisions of the Act.

COMMITTEE VIEWS

Cost of Metric Conversion

Although it is expected that the coordination activities of the Board will contribute notably to a reduction in the overall costs to American industry of converting to the metric system, the costs will still be appreciable. The committee has followed the policy recommendation of the United States Metric Study by including in the policy statement of the bill the principle that in converting to the metric system throughout American society, costs shall lie where they fall. This principle is being observed in the other major industrial countries of the world which are now in the process of converting to the metric system including Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa. The committee feels that observance of this principle will contribute substantially to making the conversion the most efficient one that can be achieved. It will place on those organizations and individuals which participate a strong incentive to make conversion effective by converting only in those cases where it is advantageous and necessary. The Committee furthermore feels that a program of reimbursement by the Federal government for any costs would be particularly difficult to administer and would in some cases be unfair to those who have already begun a conversion to the metric system.

Metric Conversion Plan

Section 11 of the bill describes procedures for the development and approval of a "comprehensive plan to accomplish a changeover to the metric system of measurement in the United States". The Committee wishes to comment on two aspects of this section: first, the content of the plan and, second, the procedures for review and approval of the plan.

The Committee believes the plan should be comprehensive in that its scope should include all sectors of the economy and all ramifications of metrication. However, it is not intended that the plan contain detailed conversion schedules for each segment of the United States economy. In fact, the bill authorizes the Board to establish advisory panels "to work with the various sectors . . . in the development and implementation of detailed changeover plans for these sectors". It is the intent of the bill that such detailed conversion schedules will be developed during the lifetime of the Board as it works its way through the changeover to metric measurement. Thus the plan to be completed within the first twelve months of the Board's life should primarily lay out procedures and approaches to metrication. The plan should describe the procedures for developing the detailed conversion schedules referred to in the foregoing, the principles governing the composition of advisory panels, and their methods of operation. The plan should indicate the general approach by which the policy given in the Act will be implemented.

The Committee clearly does not want the generation of the plan to be an excuse for delay or a bottleneck in the metrication process. The bill allows a maximum of twelve months after the appropriation of funds for the development of the plan, which the Committee considers a reasonable compromise between the desire to move ahead rapidly and the realization that there will be some delays in naming the Board, the Executive Director, and other administrative matters. Considering what must be accomplished in the way of organizing and staffing, the twelve month period is not excessive.

The procedures for developing and amending the plan are designed to allow for review by the Secretary of Commerce and the Congress without unnecessary delay. As stated, the Board has twelve months after funds are appropriated to submit a plan to the Secretary of Commerce. The Secretary then has ninety days after receipt of the plan to develop his recommendations and to forward the plan with his recommendations to the President and to both Houses of Congress.

When the Secretary forwards the plan to the President, he shall forward it at the same time to both Houses of Congress. If either House is not in session, the Secretary shall transmit the plan to both Houses at the first opportunity when both are in session on the same day. The Congress then has sixty legislative days after receipt of the plan to disapprove it by concurrent resolution. Unless disapproved, the Board shall begin to implement the plan when the sixty legislative day waiting period expires. This initiation of the implementation of the plan marks the beginning of the Board's 10 year life (Section 3).

If the Congress disapproves a plan in whole or in part, the Board must submit a revised plan to the Secretary of Commerce within sixty (60) days after the disapproval. The revised plan then follows the same procedures as described. That is, the Secretary has ninety (90) days to forward the plan to both Houses of Congress, etc. Should the Board decide to amend an approved plan, the amendment must be submitted by the Board to the Secretary, who will forward it to the Congress for approval, following the procedures as described for the approval of the original plan.

Antitrust Considerations

The Committee heard expressions of concern from a few industry associations which felt that participation by its member companies in the metric committees and panels contemplated by the act might expose them to litigation under the antitrust laws. These groups raised the question of whether, by participating in conversations and discussions with other competitive firms in the same industry, such companies might possibly be subject to prosecution under those laws.

It was suggested to the committee that a provision should be included in the bill which would state explicitly that immunity is granted from the antitrust laws for industry activities directed toward informing and advising the Board in the development of both an all-over plan and in the development of individual industry plan. The Committee concluded, however, that such a grant of immunity is unnecessary. In order to make it clear that activities of this kind are not intended to be subject to antitrust proceedings, the Committee included a section in the bill specifically requiring the Board to bring to-

gether industry groups for such purposes under the auspices of the Board. (Sec. 10(b)).

The Committee further suggests that when such groups, committees and panels are brought together, a representative of the Board be present in some capacity in order to make it entirely clear that the meeting is being held under the auspices of the Board.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

A quorum being present, the committee, by voice vote, unanimously approved the bill.

COST AND BUDGET DATA

The conversion activities and programs expected to result from this legislation will result in no cost to the Federal Government other than the administration of the Act.

In accordance with the requirements of Sec. 252(b) of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970, and based upon data supplied by the Department of Commerce, the Committee estimates the costs of administering the Act to be as follows:

| | <i>Millions</i> |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 1st year----- | \$3. 05 |
| 2d ----- | 4. 02 |
| 3d ----- | 2. 55 |
| 4th ----- | 2. 47 |
| 5th ----- | 2. 47 |

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations from the Department of Commerce accompanied the draft bill introduced March 15th, 1973, as H.R. 5749.

THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE,
Washington, D.C., March 12, 1973.

HON. CARL ALBERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Enclosed are four copies of a draft bill "To establish a national policy relating to conversion to the metric system in the United States," to be cited as the "Metric Conversion Act of 1973," together with a statement of purpose and need in support thereof.

We have been advised by the Office of Management and Budget there would be no objection to the submission of our draft bill to the Congress and further that its enactment would be consistent with the Administration's objectives.

Sincerely,

FREDERICK B. DENT,
Secretary of Commerce

Enclosures.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND NEED

In view of the increased use of the metric system of measurement in international trade and its adoption by virtually every major nation

in the world, the Congress, by Public Law 90-472 in 1968, directed the Secretary of Commerce to undertake a three year study of the metric system so as to determine its impact on the United States. The Secretary's final report, submitted in July 1971, concludes that eventually the United States will join the rest of the world in the use of the metric system as the predominant common language of measurement. Rather than drifting to metric with no national plan to help the sectors of our society and guide our relationships abroad, a carefully planned transition in which all sectors participate voluntarily is preferable. Such a plan would assist these sectors in adjusting to the metric system more efficiently, more effectively, and more economically.

As a means of providing an effective changeover to the metric system, there is herewith proposed an Act which would establish a national policy for converting to the metric system in the United States. The bill, after describing previous United States involvement in metric system measurement activities, declares that the policy of this Nation shall be to facilitate and encourage the substitutions of the metric system of weights and measures in place of the current customary measurement units in education, trade, commerce and all other sectors of the economy. It is the goal of the bill that metric units would become the predominant, though not exclusive, language of measurement within a period of ten years from the date the Board commences implementation of the changeover plan. Another important part of this policy pertains to the retention in new metric language standards of those U.S. engineering designs, practices, and conventions that are internationally accepted or embody superior technology. It would also be this country's intention to cooperate with foreign governments and private international organizations which are concerned with the encouragement and coordination of the increased use of metric measurement units or engineering standards based on such units. Finally, it would be the policy to conduct extensive public information and educational programs through use of the public media so as to familiarize the public with the meaning and applicability of metric terms and measurements in their daily life. In addition, the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare and the Director of the National Science Foundation are authorized to counsel and consult with educational associations and groups so as to assure that the metric system of measurement is made a part of the curricula of the Nation's educational institutions and that teachers and other personnel are properly trained to teach the metric system of measurement. Further, the Secretary of Commerce is authorized to consult with the National Conference of Weights and Measures so as to assure that State and local weights and measures officials are appropriately informed of the intended metric changeover and are thus assisted in their efforts to bring about timely amendments to weights and measures laws.

To carry out these policies, the bill would establish a National Metric Conversion Board composed of not more than 21 distinguished private citizens appointed by the President and 4 members of the Congress selected by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate. One of the initial functions of this Board

would be to develop and submit to the Secretary of Commerce, for his approval and transmittal to the President, a comprehensive plan to accomplish the changeover to the metric system of measurement in the United States. This plan shall be submitted to the Secretary within 12 months after funds have been appropriated to carry out the bill's provisions. The bill would give no compulsory powers to the Board and the changeover proposed by the Board in its plan would be entirely voluntary.

In developing the plan, the Board would be required to consult with United States commerce and industry, including small business, science, engineering, labor, education, consumers, nationally recognized standards developing and coordinating organizations, government agencies at the Federal, State, and local level as well as, where appropriate, with foreign governments and public international organizations. Upon the approval of the plan by the President, it would be submitted to the Congress. The Board would begin implementation of the plan sixty calendar days following the date the plan is delivered to the Congress.

The bill makes provision for an Executive Director and a staff to assist the Board. In carrying out its duties, the Board would be authorized to enter into contracts, conduct hearings, establish committees and advisory panels, and perform such other acts as may be necessary to implement the functions prescribed by the bill. Annual reports of its progress would be submitted by the Board to the Secretary of Commerce for his approval. The Secretary would, in turn, forward such reports to the President for his approval and transmittal to the Congress.

The bill would authorize the appropriation of such sums as may be necessary to carry out its provisions. The appropriations would be available for obligation and expenditure for such periods as specified in the Acts making such appropriations.

It is estimated that expenditures in the first full year of operation would approximate three million dollars.

ADDITIONAL VIEWS OF THE HONORABLE
STANFORD E. PARRIS

The original Administration Metric Bill submitted to the Congress provided for the establishment of a National Metric Conversion Board with responsibility for generating a plan for metric conversion within the United States. The bill also provided that the plan was to be submitted to the President for review and approval and to the Congress for review.

The recommendations contained in the Administration Bill were the results of an exhaustive three year study commissioned by the Congress and directed by the Department of Commerce. The 42 member panel which performed the study based its findings on extensive public hearings, supplementary investigations, plus invited oral and written contributions to numerous conferences. Altogether, some 200 presentations were submitted and discussed not including some 100 additional written papers which were received.

Based on the findings of the U.S. Metric Study, the Secretary of Commerce recommended that final review and approval/disapproval power for the metrication plan be vested in the Congress and the President respectively. This recommendation was in recognition of the fact that metric conversion in the United States impacts significantly on such vital areas as the U.S. stake in world trade, our relations with global trading partners, the transacting of domestic business in both the public and private sectors, and in fact, our national security.

However, based upon no further independent analysis or study, the provision requiring formal Executive Branch approval has now been deleted. The rationale which was propounded for the amendment was that the Secretary of Commerce, as spokesman for the President, would provide the appropriate executive perspective through his "recommendations."

I take exception to our preempting the Secretary of Commerce from playing a more substantive role in the establishment of the Metric Plan. I disagree with the amendment primarily because the counsel and expertise upon which the Commerce Department will base its recommendations represent a significant and independent source separate and distinct from that of the Conversion Board or the Congress.

Instead of a truly substantive involvement, the Executive Branch now has little more power than to direct its recommendations to the Congress for consideration. In fact, there is no requirement that the Secretary of Commerce even be permitted to see the metric plan until the plan has been completed and prepared for final transmittal to the Congress.

In my opinion, we are implementing a major and far reaching change in our system of weights and measures by the passage of this

bill and the subsequent adoption of the conversion plan. Clearly, the public interest demands that this nation summon its full executive and legislative resources in accomplishing the conversion. I, therefore, regret that the legislation in its present form adopts the parochial point of view that the Congress be established as the only body of expertise in approving or disapproving any portions or all of the formal plan for the conversion of our nation to the metric system.

STANFORD E. PARRIS.

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